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Annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children

Summary

This second annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children is submitted to the General Assembly in accordance with its resolution 65/197. It is guided by the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children (A/61/299) and builds upon the vision and the priority areas identified by the Special Representative in her initial report (A/65/292).

The present report complements the annual report of the Special Representative to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/16/54) and reviews key developments and initiatives promoted to advance progress in the follow-up to the study at the global, regional and national levels, institutionalize regional governance structures and strengthen strategic alliances to speed up global progress towards a world free from violence.

To further accelerate progress, the report identifies areas to which the Special Representative will devote special attention in the forthcoming period: (a) promoting the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child; (b) further consolidating regional governance structures on violence against children; (c) continuing the series of expert consultations on violence-related topics; and (d) conducting a global survey to assess progress and inform further action in the area of preventing and responding to violence.

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I. Mandate and strategic priorities

1. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children[1] acts as a high-profile, global independent advocate of the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children. Her mandate is guided by the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children and its strategic recommendations (A/61/299) and promotes the protection of children from violence as a human rights imperative. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto, together with other international human rights instruments, provide a firm normative foundation for preventing and responding to violence. For this reason, the Special Representative promotes the universal ratification and effective implementation of core human rights treaties.

2. The Special Representative acts as a bridge-builder and a catalyst of action in all regions and across sectors and settings in which violence against children may occur. She cooperates with a wide range of strategic partners within and beyond the United Nations system, and mobilizes action and political support to maintain momentum around this agenda, to generate renewed concern about the harmful effects of violence on children, to promote behavioural and social change, and to achieve steady progress along the way.

3. The Special Representative makes use of mutually supportive strategies, including promoting advocacy of the protection of children from violence; contributing to strategic meetings at the international, regional and national levels to accelerate progress in this field, to identify good practices and to promote the exchange of experiences across regions, sectors and settings; organizing field missions; and developing thematic studies and reports.

4. As detailed in previous reports to the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council,[2] the Special Representative places a priority focus on:

(a) Promoting a strategic agenda, building upon the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children (see section II below);

(b) Strengthening key partnerships in order to achieve and sustain progress in the follow-up to the study (see section III below);

(c) Ensuring firm support for her mandate, including sound funding, to promote progress in the prevention of violence and in the protection of children from all its forms (see section IV below).

5. The overall thrust of the Special Representative's mandate is to accelerate progress in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the study. In view of their particular urgency, three of those recommendations included time-bound targets. These are also the areas to which the Special Representative devotes priority attention, namely:

(a) The development in each State of a national comprehensive strategy for preventing and responding to all forms of violence;

[1] The Special Representative assumed her position on 1 September 2009. A fuller explanation of her appointment and mandate can be found in A/HRC/13/46.

[2] A/HRC/16/54 and A/65/262, respectively.

(b) The introduction of an explicit legal ban on all forms of violence against children, in all settings;

(c) The consolidation of a national system for data collection, analysis and dissemination, and a research agenda on violence against children.

6. Promising national progress has been achieved in these areas. The Special Representative has pursued these priority objectives through a process of regional engagement with intergovernmental organizations and political groupings, the convening of expert consultations on strategic dimensions of the agenda aimed at combating violence against children, and the development of thematic reports in support of advocacy, policy and legal reform,[3] as well as through 37 country missions in all regions.

II. Consolidating progress on the strategic agenda for the implementation of the United Nations study

7. During the first year of the Special Representative's mandate, in order to consolidate change in the aforementioned priority areas, particular attention was given to the revitalization of networks involved in the development of the study, the promotion of new alliances and further consolidation of strategic partnerships and, in particular, the institutionalization of regional governance structures related to violence against children. Those efforts have been critical in promoting the mainstreaming of the issue of the freedom of children from violence into the policy agenda at the international, regional and national levels.

8. The second year of the mandate was a key period in which to rally firm support for efforts to address persisting challenges and to accelerate global progress towards a world free from violence. In support of that process, the Special Representative organized, with key partners, three expert consultations on critical areas of concern, namely, child-sensitive mechanisms for addressing incidents of violence, law reform to ensure the protection of children, and strategies for preventing and addressing violence in schools. The main conclusions and recommendations resulting from those meetings are presented below.

9. The Special Representative is also preparing the publication of thematic reports and advocacy tools on these subjects, to assist governments and other stakeholders in ensuring the protection of children from violence. Materials will be developed especially for children, including on child-sensitive mechanisms for responding to incidents of violence.

10. As part of her advocacy and communication strategy, the Special Representative established a website (http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org) to disseminate information about significant developments related to the protection of children from violence. The website is also a platform for networking among key partners and includes social media tools and a Children's Corner with child-friendly materials.

[3] See the joint report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Special Representative on Violence against Children on child-sensitive counselling, reporting and complaint mechanisms, submitted to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/16/56); two other joint reports, on law reform and violence in schools, are forthcoming.

11. In 2011, the Special Representative has, within the overall framework of her priority agenda, placed a special emphasis on:

(a) Moving towards the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention, in particular to ensure the protection of children from sale, prostitution and pornography;

(b) Consolidating the legal protection of children from all forms of violence;

(c) Promoting the establishment of safe and child-sensitive counselling, reporting and complaint mechanisms to address incidents of violence against children, including children with disabilities;

(d) Widening awareness and advocacy in order to prevent and address violence against children in education, as well as in justice-related institutions;

(e) Conducting a global survey to assess progress in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children.

A. Moving towards the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

12. The global campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, launched in 2010 by the Secretary-General, provides a critical agenda for consolidating the institutional partnership with strategic allies within the United Nations system, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The campaign has also become a crucial reference for collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

13. In the light of her mandate, the Special Representative on Violence against Children places a special focus on achieving global adherence to the protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. She pursues that agenda through global advocacy, regional engagement and field missions.

14. During the first year of the campaign, significant progress was made. The goal of universal ratification was incorporated into the United Nations policy agenda, including the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons[4] and the Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2016, adopted on 11 May 2011 at the Hague Global Child Labour Conference (see section III below). Commitment to the ratification and implementation of the Protocol was also expressed by regional organizations and political groupings, including the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the League of Arab States, the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children and States from the Asia-Pacific region. The Council of Europe launched a wide-scale information campaign about sexual

[4] Adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/293; see in particular paragraph 4 of the Global Plan of Action.

violence against children, of which the ratification of the Protocol is a core component.

15. Since the launching of the campaign, eight States have ratified the Protocol: Djibouti, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Malta, Mauritius, Nigeria, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The Central African Republic has signed the instrument.

16. In May 2011, in order to accelerate progress, the Special Representative, in collaboration with strategic partners, hosted a treaty event in New York on the occasion of the first anniversary of the launching of the campaign, and supported a regional event in Addis Ababa hosted by the African Union with the Economic Commission for Africa, UNICEF and OHCHR. At these and other high-level meetings, the campaign received strong support from Governments, United Nations agencies, parliamentarians, children's advocates, faith-based organizations and civil society organizations.

17. At least 18 States have made formal commitments to the ratification of the Protocol, including within the framework of the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council and before the Committee on the Rights of the Child or human rights mandate-holders. Of those that are not yet parties, 40 per cent have ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and 90 per cent have ratified ILO Convention No. 182, on the Worst Forms of Child Labour; these address similar areas of concern.

B. Consolidating the legal protection of children from all forms of violence

18. The adoption of legislation to prohibit all forms of violence against children, in all settings, together with an appropriate legal framework for preventing and responding to violence, was a critical recommendation of the study and constitutes a priority of the Special Representative's mandate. To advance progress in this crucial area, the Special Representative organized, together with OHCHR, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the international non-governmental organization Advisory Council for the follow-up to the study on violence against children, an expert consultation on law reform held in Geneva in July 2011. The main findings of the consultation are presented below.

19. As highlighted in previous reports, law reform on violence against children is an area that is gaining momentum. When the study was finalized, 16 countries had legislation prohibiting violence in all settings. To date, 29 have introduced such a comprehensive legal ban, in some cases incorporating it into their Constitutions. In some countries, courts have also been instrumental in guaranteeing the right of the child to respect for his or her physical integrity and to freedom from violence, including within the family. Across regions, there are significant initiatives under way to achieve the full legal prohibition of violence against children, and many countries have adopted legislation on specific forms of such violence, including sexual abuse and exploitation, trafficking and harmful traditional practices.

20. Over the past two years, regional organizations and political groupings have also embraced this goal as a priority, including the Organization of Islamic

Cooperation, the League of Arab States, the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children, MERCOSUR and the Council of Europe. In addition, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights have been active supporters.

21. In spite of these important developments, vigorous efforts are still needed. First, efforts to introduce an explicit legal ban on all forms of violence against children need to be scaled up: globally, fewer than 5 per cent of children benefit from legal protection from all forms of violence in all settings.

22. Second, in countries where legislation has been enacted, further measures are required to narrow the gap between law and practice. The concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the implementation of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography indicate that, in more than half of the countries reviewed, the legislation on child prostitution needs to be amended, including to ensure the protection of boys. The concluding observations on the implementation of the Convention indicate that, in at least one third of countries, legislative provisions on other forms of sexual violence are inadequate, as they fail to criminalize rape or to provide an adequate definition of sexual abuse. Similarly, research conducted by the Child Rights Information Network indicates that in at least 40 countries, children are at risk of being sentenced to violent forms of punishment, including whipping, flogging, caning or amputation, and that in a number of countries the law still allows children to be sentenced to death.

23. In short, although steps have been taken in many countries to prohibit violence against children in some forms and contexts, only a few have introduced comprehensive bans. Moreover, law enforcement has remained weak, with limited dissemination and understanding of the changes introduced. Efforts to monitor the impact of legal reform, to address emerging concerns and to ensure well-coordinated and well-resourced services and programmes to support victims in their healing and long-term reintegration have been scarce.

24. The Geneva expert consultation on law reform provided a strategic platform for the review of initiatives and positive experiences in various countries of the world, the acknowledgement of progress, and reflection on critical factors facilitating or compromising the legal protection of children from violence in the five settings identified in the study. The meeting also included the identification of opportunities to accelerate progress and promote technical advice in this critical area.

25. The meeting resulted in important conclusions and recommendations to ensure the freedom of children from violence in various forms and settings, including sexual abuse and exploitation, trafficking, harmful traditional practices, juvenile justice, labour-related violence and violence within the home. These will be addressed in greater detail in the thematic report to be issued by the Special Representative on this topic in the coming months.

26. In anticipation of that report, the following four overarching conclusions deserve special attention in view of their crucial value for shaping legislative initiatives on violence against children.

27. First, law reform on violence against children is an essential component of a robust national child protection system. For that reason, it needs to be supported by well-coordinated and well-resourced services and institutions, and pursued through a holistic approach. This involves addressing the root causes of violence; prohibiting and deterring incidents of violence; safeguarding the rights of all children, including those at greater risk; providing redress and reintegration; and fighting impunity. The establishment by law of accessible, child-sensitive and safe counselling, reporting and complaint mechanisms to address incidents of violence is a crucial dimension of this process.

28. Second, law reform is an ongoing process and cannot be reduced to isolated or fragmented actions. It requires consistent efforts to ensure harmonization with international standards and implement political commitments undertaken in this area; to fill gaps in implementation; and to address emerging concerns, such as those arising from the use of new technologies. Where deeply rooted social conventions condone the use of violence as a child-rearing practice or a necessary form of discipline, it is critical to promote a sustained process of advocacy, education, law enactment and enforcement, and evaluation.

29. Third, legislation to protect children from violence is by nature complex and wide-ranging. It requires a comprehensive and explicit legal ban to convey an unequivocal message that children's right to freedom from violence must be safeguarded everywhere and at all times. Through constitutional reform or the introduction of new provisions in family and criminal codes and in child protection and domestic violence legislation, this process is gaining ground in an increasing number of States.

30. Legal prohibition must also be supported by detailed provisions in specific pieces of legislation, both to address distinct forms of violence, such as sexual abuse and exploitation, trafficking or harmful traditional practices, and to tackle violence in specific settings, including schools, care and justice institutions and the home. It is critical that enabling laws and regulations be developed in relevant legal fields to give full meaning to the prohibition and deter incidents of violence, to protect the children concerned, to ensure appropriate support for the process of enforcement and to fight impunity.

31. These two approaches, comprehensive and specific, are therefore needed and are indeed mutually supportive.

32. Fourth, law reform initiatives have been particularly successful when promoted through an inclusive and participatory process, with the involvement of key stakeholders including governmental departments, parliamentarians, independent national institutions for children's rights and key actors in civil society, including professional groups, local authorities and religious leaders, as well as young people themselves.

33. Moreover, law enforcement has been more effective when such initiatives have been supported with social mobilization initiatives and awareness-raising campaigns (both for the public in general and for children and their families in particular) and supported by the development of ethical standards, capacity-building activities and concrete guidance for professionals and institutions working for and with children. For this reason, law reform initiatives should include a clear plan of

implementation, with an estimation of costs and an anticipated allocation of resources to meet them.

C. Promoting the establishment of child-sensitive counselling, reporting and complaint mechanisms to address incidents of violence against children, and ensuring their availability, accessibility and use by children with disabilities

34. At the request of the Human Rights Council, the Special Representative joined the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in the preparation of a report on effective and child-sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms to address incidents of violence, including sexual violence (A/HRC/16/56). The Council has urged States to ensure that such mechanisms are confidential, age-appropriate, gender-sensitive, disability-sensitive, safe, well publicized and accessible to all children. A similar recommendation was made in the United Nations study on violence against children.

35. Counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms constitute critical remedies to address breaches of children's rights, including violence. Their development is anchored in international human rights standards, and, in view of their urgency, the Third World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, held in Rio de Janeiro in 2008, called for their establishment in all countries by 2013.

36. Based on the findings of an expert consultation convened in 2010 with OHCHR, and on research conducted by and information received from national Governments and other stakeholders, the joint report provides an overview of existing counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms. It acknowledges efforts made in many countries by Governments, national human rights institutions, civil society and community-based organizations to promote counselling and to facilitate complaints and reporting of incidents of violence, including sexual abuse and exploitation. But it also recognizes that those initiatives remain piecemeal and are often inadequate to address children's specific concerns. As a result, they are insufficient to ensure the protection of children from violence and are often not seen as core components of a robust child protection system.

37. More often than not, children cannot easily gain access to counselling, reporting and complaint mechanisms and lack trust in such services, fearing that they will be disregarded rather than believed, judged rather than listened to. Children fear that they will be subjected to public exposure, stigmatization, harassment and reprisals if they report incidents of violence. Often, children are unaware of available mechanisms and have no information about how to obtain advice and assistance.

38. In the case of sexual exploitation and abuse, which are often committed by people whom children know and trust within institutions, in schools and in the home, parents feel tempted to conceal such incidents in order to protect their children and safeguard the image and unity of the family. Professionals may lack the training necessary to identify early signals and address incidents of violence in an ethical and gender- and child-sensitive manner, and may have no guidance as to whether and how they are expected to report such cases or how to refer them. When

they are addressed, incidents of violence continue to be considered separately, by different professionals, and through the lens of disconnected disciplines, creating the risk of revictimization.

39. Children with special vulnerabilities have particular difficulties in gaining access to counselling, reporting and complaint mechanisms. In the light of the thematic debate in the General Assembly on the rights of children with disabilities, the Special Representative takes this opportunity to highlight the special challenges faced by these children.

40. The lives of children with disabilities are fraught with stigma, discrimination, cultural prejudices, misperceptions and invisibility. Their capacity and their positive potential are often ignored. Their existence is often marked by neglect, violence, injury and exploitation. In spite of the limited amount of data and research in this area, available studies reveal an alarming level of risk for violence against children with disabilities, ranging from high vulnerability to physical and emotional violence when they are young to greater risks of sexual violence as they reach puberty.

41. Disability is still perceived largely as a curse, a source of shame for the family and a misfortune for the community. At times, it is believed to be the result of witchcraft or possession by evil spirits; the child's liberation is thought to be achieved through starvation, exposure to extreme heat or cold or to fire, or severe beatings.

42. When used as beggars, children with disabilities are subject to violence to keep them on the streets, and often suffer physical abuse to attract attention and encourage charity. In schools that are often of low quality, they endure beatings, bullying, neglect and abuse by their peers and by ill-prepared teachers who fail to understand and attend to their special needs. For children placed in institutions with ill-trained, ill-paid and often frustrated staff, in an environment of stigmatizing attitudes in the community, there are increased risks of physical violence and of verbal and emotional abuse.

43. For the families of children with disabilities, heavy demands and high stress, lack of support and services, and a deep sense of isolation aggravate the risk of violence within the household. Some families respond with neglect rather than with active violence. Others shield the child from contact with the outside world, including to protect him or her from abuse and stigmatization, sometimes in appalling conditions (such as windowless rooms or hot courtyards). Still others arrange for a "mercy killing" to put an end to the child's perceived suffering, at times as a result of pressure from or upon the advice of other family members or influential actors in the community.

44. Children with disabilities are less able than other children to escape the threat of violence or to report the abuses that they have endured. These difficulties become insurmountable when their only point of reference is the abuser, be it a family member, a neighbour or a professional worker on whom they depend. They may be unwilling to complain, fearing that if they do so they will lose the support of caregivers and the attention and affection of those on whom they have come to rely. Access to counselling, reporting and complaint services may be physically difficult to gain.

45. Moreover, incidents reported by children with disabilities are largely dismissed; there is a prevailing perception that such children are easily confused and are unable to provide convincing and accurate testimony.

46. In many cases, the justice system is not child-friendly or disability-sensitive; the challenges faced by a blind child in identifying a sexual offender amply illustrate this. However, in many countries additional barriers persist, including where the legal system fails to recognize the testimony of children with disabilities in court and prevents them from testifying under oath or signing legal documents. Under such circumstances, the conspiracy of silence becomes insurmountable.

47. In the light of these concerns, the report to the Human Rights Council presents a set of guiding principles based on human rights standards, as well as practical recommendations to accelerate progress in making safe, child-sensitive and effective mechanisms available to all children. These mechanisms need to be established by law and to have well-defined mandates, guided by the best interests of the child and informed by children's experiences and perspectives. They need to be well publicized and made accessible to all children, without discrimination of any kind, and must guarantee children's safety, ensure confidentiality and allow for prompt and speedy response and follow-up.

48. These critical requirements are essential in helping children to feel empowered, supported and reassured that they will be listened to in an ethical and safe manner, and that their testimony will not be disclosed or misused or place them at further risk.

D. Preventing and addressing violence against children in schools

49. In many countries, initiatives to prevent and address violence against children in schools are building momentum. Some key developments of this significant process of change include campaigns aimed at ensuring learning without fear and at addressing specific forms of violence, including bullying, cyberbullying and gender-based violence. School audits and participatory debates inform the promotion of ethical standards and encourage child-sensitive counselling, reporting, mediation and victim assistance. Data and research address root causes of violence and support children at risk. Law reform initiatives seek to prohibit all forms of violence in education.

50. Education has a unique potential to create a positive environment in which attitudes condoning violence can be changed and non-violent behaviour can be learned. Schools are well placed to break patterns of violence and to provide skills that enable people to communicate, negotiate and support peaceful solutions to conflicts. This is possible at all stages of life, especially early childhood, when initiatives can decisively improve the development of talents and abilities, reduce marginalization and associated risks of violence, and promote access to school and educational achievement. An environment free of violence in all its forms is also instrumental to promoting the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular to ensure universal primary education for all and to eliminate gender disparities in education.

51. Unfortunately, this unique potential is in marked contrast to the daily reality of millions of children. Within and around educational settings, both girls and boys

continue to be exposed to violence, including verbal abuse, intimidation, physical aggression and, in some cases, sexual abuse. At times they are also victims of gang violence and assault.

52. Violence has a negative and often long-term impact on child victims. Beyond those directly affected, however, it creates fear and insecurity among students, hampering their learning opportunities and well-being. This in turn gives rise to anxiety and concerns in the family, sometimes fuelling pressure to keep children, particularly girls, out of school or to encourage school abandonment as a means of avoiding further violence.

53. Recognizing the crucial importance of education in safeguarding children's rights and of violence-free schools as catalysts for non-violence in the communities that they serve, the Special Representative, in cooperation with the Government of Norway and the Council of Europe, organized an expert consultation on tackling violence in schools. The meeting was held in Oslo in June 2011, and brought together policymakers, education and children's-rights experts, civil society organizations and academics from various regions of the world, as well as United Nations agencies.

54. The consultation was guided by international and regional human rights standards and the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children. The study highlights the fact that the most effective approaches to countering violence in schools are tailored to the specific circumstances of each school. These approaches also have key elements in common, as "they are based on the recognition that all children have equal rights to education in settings that are free of violence, and that one of the functions of education is to produce adults imbued with the non-violent values and practises".[5]

55. The Oslo consultation recognized the importance of preventing and responding to violence in schools through a multidimensional strategy. In particular, it recommended that the following five priority dimensions be taken into account:

(a) Promoting holistic, participatory and child-centred strategies;

(b) Partnering with children;

(c) Supporting teachers and staff with the necessary skills and resources;

(d) Consolidating data and research in this field;

(e) Ensuring the legal protection of children.

1. Promoting holistic, participatory and child-centred strategies

56. Schools are an inherent part of the communities in which they are located; violence in the school mirrors social attitudes condoning violence and also reflects the environment surrounding the school, including social unrest, the availability of weapons and criminal gang activities. For this reason, efforts to bring an end to violence in school must not only invest in ensuring a safe and child-friendly environment in educational settings, but also seek to address the cultural acceptance of violence against children, and invest in violence prevention and positive discipline initiatives for families and the community at large.

[5] *World Report on Violence against Children*, 2006, p. 138.

57. Schools succeed in their efforts to curb violence in particular when they break away from a strictly sectoral approach in favour of holistic, participatory and child-centred strategies. Such strategies help to involve families in school life and envisage children as crucial actors and agents of change, shaping decisions with their perspectives and experiences. Furthermore, they help to overcome bureaucratic and administrative divisions and operate in a multifaceted way, through investments in teacher and school staff training, curriculum development, school administration, policy development, budgetary allocations and strong legislation to guarantee the protection of children from violence.

58. This whole-school ethos informed the significant experiences shared at the Oslo meeting, including experiences with initiatives designed to prevent bullying in schools. The success of such initiatives has been closely associated with the engagement of teachers, staff and students, as well as parents and other members of the community. Reductions in the number of incidents of bullying have also been achieved as a result of a strong commitment, a clear plan and a strategic combination of efforts, namely:

(a) A sincere and widely shared commitment to address this phenomenon, with the formal adoption and wide dissemination of anti-bullying rules, and their launching at an official school event;

(b) The establishment of a governance system in which all stakeholders participate;

(c) The development of a monitoring system, with the periodic review of incidents and issues of concern;

(d) The dissemination of anti-bullying messages in the community at large.

59. These important lessons learned from anti-bullying programmes provide a crucial reference for the prevention and elimination of other forms of violence against children in schools.

2. Partnering with children

60. School- and system-wide interventions deepen understanding and encourage change in attitudes and social norms that condone violence, including its use as a form of discipline. They also help to promote a culture of tolerance, respect and non-violence and, as a result, prevent violence, contribute to reductions in school absenteeism and abandonment, improve academic achievement and enhance children's social skills and well-being.

61. In order to consolidate this process, it is critical to partner with children. Joining hands with young people helps to counter the invisibility of violence, increase understanding of children's perceptions of this phenomenon, and enhance the overall effectiveness of efforts to prevent and eliminate violence in its various forms.

62. Children recognize the importance of clear and unambiguous rules based on the protection of their rights. In spite of the high levels of violence that many of them endure, they remain committed to promoting an inclusive and violence-free school environment. Across regions, they are becoming involved in school clubs, peer education and peer counselling programmes and mediation and conflict-solving

efforts, and are participating in school councils and disciplinary proceedings in which incidents of violence are addressed.

63. In order to support children in this process, it is critical to promote a child-friendly school environment and relevant curricula focusing on life skills and human rights education, and to nurture the values of social equality, tolerance towards diversity and non-violent means of resolving conflict. All these elements can provide children with alternative ways of understanding the world, even in situations where violence outside the school affects their communities and their lives.

64. For vulnerable groups of children, including girls, children with disabilities, children belonging to minority or indigenous groups, and children affected by HIV and AIDS, these efforts must be redoubled. Such children face particular challenges in gaining access to schooling and in remaining in school. They are more likely to be subjected to violence or to be disregarded when they seek advice about or report incidents of violence. As a result, they may end up choosing not to report violence for fear of drawing attention to themselves.

3. Supporting teachers and other school staff with necessary skills and resources

65. Teachers and other school staff are decisive actors in preventing and responding to violence. It is therefore essential to provide them with the necessary skills, support and resources. Raising awareness and providing information about violence against children is indispensable in this process. It helps to equip staff to use constructive-discipline techniques and methods in school, to partner with students in violence prevention, to serve as positive role models, to learn about peaceful conflict mediation and resolution, and to promote school-safety mechanisms such as codes of conduct and student-friendly reporting mechanisms. Equally important is the provision of clear guidance on addressing incidents of violence, mandatory reporting and providing assistance to child victims.

66. Dimensions such as these are vital to enable schools to identify early warning signs of violence, to support children at special risk and to provide timely and effective support in an ethical and child-sensitive manner.

67. In the absence of training in child-friendly pedagogy, and without awareness, information or guidance regarding violence against children, teachers and other school staff may believe that resorting to violent methods to maintain academic standards or impose discipline is a natural or needed response. Children in turn may internalize such values and regard violence as a valid strategy for resolving disputes and imposing their views on their peers. When violence prevention skills and training have been provided, however, there is greater openness to resorting to alternative, positive forms of discipline and advocating the abandonment of violence in school.

4. Consolidating data and research on violence in schools

68. Although statistical information on violence in schools is scarce and fragmented, available data confirm the serious magnitude of this phenomenon and its long-lasting consequences, both for children and their families and for the education system as a whole. Surveys conducted in a number of countries have confirmed this pattern and, in some cases, have assisted in the reporting of emerging

forms of violence, including a new form of sexual abuse in schools, referred to as "sex for grades".

69. Sound data and research are urgently needed in this field. Without reliable data, national planning is undermined, effective policymaking and resource mobilization are hampered, and targeted interventions are limited in their ability to address and prevent violence in schools.

70. Data and research are indispensable if we are to expose the hidden face of violence and address its root causes; understand perceptions and attitudes regarding this phenomenon, including among girls and boys of various ages and social backgrounds; identify children at greater risk and effectively support them; and assess the economic costs of violence and the social gains that can be achieved through steady investment in prevention. These are areas where consolidated partnerships and the acceleration of efforts will remain of the essence.

5. Ensuring the legal protection of children from violence in schools

71. The effectiveness of measures to deter and eliminate violence in schools is significantly curtailed without a supportive legal framework. As indicated above, clear, unambiguous legislation that prohibits all forms of violence and protects children from them, including within the school, is a key component of any comprehensive strategy on violence against children.

72. In addition to the 29 countries that have introduced an explicit legal ban on all forms of violence against children in all contexts, several have adopted specific legislation to counter violence in schools. In the majority of countries, violence in schools, including the ill treatment and beating of children, is considered impermissible and is punished with disciplinary measures. When certain more serious forms of violence occur, such as sexual harassment or abuse, the outcome may be the dismissal and prosecution of those found responsible.

73. In the recent past, there have been significant legislative developments in this area. In some countries, new laws have been enacted to prevent bullying, as was the case in 2011 in Peru. In others, legislation has been adopted that addresses incidents of violence more broadly. For example, in India the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 bans the physical punishment and mental harassment of children. The Act provides for disciplinary measures in the event of the violation of this ban and recognizes the responsibility of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights in monitoring its implementation and safeguarding the rights of the children concerned.

74. In spite of these important developments, the legal prohibition of violence against children in schools is not yet a reality in 80 countries around the world. Moreover, the overall gap between legislation and prevailing practice remains wide and challenging. For this reason, efforts to accelerate progress in this area will continue.

E. Conducting a global survey to assess progress in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children

75. The year 2011 marks the midpoint of the Special Representative's mandate and five years since the review by the General Assembly of the United Nations study on

violence against children. Thus, it is a strategic opportunity to gain a perspective on the progress achieved, to reflect on good practices and success factors, and to boost efforts to overcome persistent challenges in and generate renewed momentum towards the protection of children from violence.

76. With this in mind, the Special Representative is conducting a global survey to map and assess progress in the implementation of the study's recommendations. The survey will be developed in close collaboration with partners, including Governments, United Nations agencies, regional organizations and institutions, and civil society and children's organizations. The significant analytical reviews conducted in a number of regions, including by the League of Arab States, the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children and MERCOSUR, will be an essential component of this process.

77. The survey will also build upon relevant initiatives and processes, including the universal periodic review process in the Human Rights Council, the process of reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other treaty bodies, and the follow-up to the World Congresses against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents and to the Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2016, adopted at the Hague Global Child Labour Conference in 2010.

78. In cooperation with civil society partners, a special effort will be made to take into account the views of children and young people. The participation and expertise of children were critical in the development of the study and have remained indispensable in its follow-up, including through regional youth forums and the formal representation of children in regional governance structures.

79. The survey is intended to assess progress achieved in the implementation of the recommendations of the study and to help shape a forward-looking agenda. In this connection, an analytical report detailing the outcomes of the survey will be submitted to the General Assembly in 2012, at which time the Assembly will review the three-year mandate and consider further follow-up to the study.

III. Strategic partnerships and the institutionalization of regional governance structures to accelerate progress[6]

80. The Special Representative remains firmly committed to further strengthening strategic alliances for the protection of children from all forms of violence, within and beyond the United Nations system. Important institutional collaboration mechanisms have been established in support of her mandate, including the Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children, the non-governmental organization Advisory Council for the follow-up to the study on violence against children, and regional high-level governance structures established for the follow-up to the study.

[6] This section complements the information provided in A/HRC/16/54.

A. Cooperation with the United Nations system, including human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms

81. Collaboration with United Nations partners has been crucial in raising awareness of and broadening global support for the protection of children from violence, promoting the mainstreaming of this topic into United Nations activities, and generating policy debate through the holding of strategic panel discussions with key partners on areas of critical concern.

82. The periodic meetings of the Inter-Agency Working Group are an important forum for consultation, policy formulation and mainstreaming within the United Nations agenda on violence against children. This strategic cooperation has led to significant initiatives, including the advancement of the campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the promotion of better data and research in order to put an end to the invisibility and social acceptance of violence and to support strategic advocacy, policy development and resource mobilization.

83. In 2011, in order to further mainstream into the United Nations agenda the protection of children from violence, the Special Representative has promoted a number of high-level policy discussions. These have taken place in such forums as the Human Rights Council, in discussions on the rights of street children and on child-sensitive mechanisms for addressing incidents of violence; the Commission for Social Development, in discussions on extreme poverty and violence against children; the Commission on the Status of Women, in discussions on tackling violence, including sexual violence, against girls and on quality education and gender discrimination; and in the lead-up to the General Assembly, in discussions on the rights of children with disabilities. In addition, strategic cooperation has been promoted with United Nations partners to curb violence in communities and minimize the impacts of situations of armed and gang violence on children, including through policies that help to reduce the availability of and access to small arms.

84. Furthermore, the Special Representative has pursued close collaboration with human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms in order to capitalize on synergies across mandates and to promote a mutually supportive agenda. The joint report with the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography shows the potential of such strategic cooperation. Similarly, concerted efforts have been deployed in support of the new optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, providing for a communication procedure.

85. The partnership with the Committee on the Rights of the Child has been particularly strategic, including in encouraging the universal ratification and effective implementation of international children's rights treaties, promoting advocacy and law reform on violence prevention and elimination, and establishing safe and child-sensitive counselling, reporting and complaint mechanisms to address incidents of violence. The Committee's adoption of a general comment on the right of the child to freedom from violence[7] opens new avenues for strategic cooperation.

[7] CRC/C/GC/13.

B. Cooperation with intergovernmental and regional organizations and institutions

86. Collaboration with regional partners is a cornerstone of the Special Representative's strategy for consolidating the implementation of the study's recommendations within and across countries. In order to advance that process and institutionalize key alliances, the Special Representative participated in strategic, high-level regional meetings. She supported significant advocacy and policy initiatives and strengthened partnerships with regional institutions and organizations and with regional mechanisms established to support the follow-up to the study. This is an area where significant progress has been achieved.[8]

87. First, important regional political commitments on violence against children have been undertaken, including in the context of the 2009 Cairo Declaration adopted by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation; the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children; the Beijing Declaration on South-South Cooperation for Child Rights in the Asia-Pacific Region; the Marrakesh Declaration adopted at the Fourth High-level Arab Conference on the Rights of the Child; the road map on violence against children adopted by South American countries; the Council of Europe Strategy for 2009-2011, "Building a Europe for and with Children"; and the European Union Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child, including the strategy on violence against children and the recently adopted Agenda for the Rights of the Child.

88. Second, there has been a growing institutionalization of regional governance structures and regional initiatives in support of the follow-up to the study's recommendations. Leading regional institutions are playing a pivotal role in moving this agenda forward. These include the Subcommittee on Violence against Children of the League of Arab States, the Governing Board of the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children, the Platform on Children's Rights of the Council of Europe, the Permanent Commission of the Niñ@Sur Initiative of MERCOSUR, the Latin American and Caribbean chapter of the Global Movement for Children, the African Union Department of Social Affairs and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children

89. In South Asia, solid collaboration was established with the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children, created in 2010 to guide the process of the national implementation of the recommendations of the study. The Initiative's strategic plan for 2010-2015 includes time-bound targets to monitor the progress achieved and is reviewed annually by a governing body composed of representatives of South Asian Governments, civil society and children's organizations.

Asia-Pacific region

90. In the Asia-Pacific region, the Beijing Declaration adopted at the High-level Meeting on South-South Cooperation for Child Rights in the Asia-Pacific Region, held in November 2010, focused strongly on violence against children, calling for a systematic approach to child protection concerns, based on laws and policies

[8] See also A/65/262, sect. C, and A/HRC/16/54, paras. 41-57.

safeguarding children from potential harm and banning all forms of violence against children.

91. A significant platform for cooperation was also developed with the Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and with the recently established ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, which has identified violence against children as a priority for its agenda.

League of Arab States

92. Firm commitments have been made by the League of Arab States, which carried out a comprehensive regional study to collect information about national developments towards the prevention and elimination of violence against children and identified areas for strengthening the process of follow-up to the recommendations of the study. The Marrakesh Declaration adopted at the Fourth High-level Arab Conference on the Rights of the Child, held in December 2010, called on member States to pursue further efforts in collaboration with the Special Representative, including with a view to the development of national strategies to combat violence against children; the establishment of national follow-up and reporting mechanisms; the enactment of legislation to protect children from violence, neglect, ill treatment and exploitation; and the provision of services to support victims, as well as to undertake measures to combat impunity.

African Union and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

93. The year 2011 has been marked by enhanced collaboration with the African Union Department of Social Affairs and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, building upon the framework of cooperation developed with those institutions. The Special Representative partnered with the African Union initiative to promote the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other child rights treaties. With the African Committee of Experts, important strides were made in strengthening the protection of children from violence, not least through the Burkina Faso technical consultation on legislative reform in Africa to prohibit violence against children, including corporal punishment.

94. The Special Representative also joined in the commemoration of the 2011 Day of the African Child, devoted to the theme "All together for urgent actions in favour of street children". The meeting held by the African Committee of Experts was an important follow-up to the 2011 thematic debate in the Human Rights Council on child rights and highlighted the significant challenges faced by children living and working in the streets in the African region. The meeting underlined the fact that street children are particularly vulnerable to extreme forms of violence. Their lives are fraught with stigma, fear and invisibility, and they are at high risk for harassment, ill treatment and abuse. For these children, the challenges of reporting incidents of violence are insurmountable.

95. The Day of the African Child was a strategic opportunity to join with the African Committee of Experts in calling for the establishment of widely publicized, accessible, safe and child-sensitive counselling, reporting and complaint mechanisms; national investment in well-resourced child protection systems,

including legislation banning all forms of violence against children; and the abolishment of status offences, including the decriminalization of survival behaviour such as begging, truancy and vagrancy. These solutions need to be promoted among street children themselves, with an understanding of their perspectives, thus investing in their genuine empowerment and enabling them to make informed choices in situations where the risk of violence may be effectively prevented.

Common Market of the South

96. In the Americas, follow-up to the United Nations study on violence against children has been carried out within the framework of the Twentieth Pan American Child Congress and the strong institutional cooperation developed with the Inter-American Children's Institute of the Organization of the American States, the Rapporteur on the Rights of the Child of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Latin American and Caribbean chapter of the Global Movement for Children, and the Ibero-American Conference of Ministers Responsible for Children and Adolescents.

97. In April 2011, this process gained renewed political impetus through the holding of the first subregional high-level meeting to follow up on the study. The South American meeting was hosted by the Government of Paraguay, in the context of its chairmanship of MERCOSUR and of the Permanent Commission of the Niñ@Sur Initiative. The meeting was co-organized with the Special Representative and the Latin American and Caribbean chapter of the Global Movement for Children, and had the participation of MERCOSUR member and associated States, as well as representatives of civil society, including children's organizations, children's advocates and the media.

98. The discussions in Paraguay were informed by an analytical review of national measures adopted to advance the implementation of the study's recommendations. The review was based on national reports submitted on the development of a comprehensive strategy for preventing and addressing violence against children, the legal protection of children from violence, and the consolidation of data and research.

99. The meeting led to significant outcomes: (a) the adoption of a forward-looking road map to advance progress and address gaps and persisting challenges; (b) the development of national strategies on violence against children by individual countries aligned with the regional road map; and (c) within MERCOSUR, the incorporation of the regional road map into the agenda of the Permanent Commission of the Niñ@Sur Initiative, which will review its implementation on an annual basis in the light of national reports submitted by Governments.

100. Two other high-level meetings, in Central America and in the Caribbean, are expected to be held in the near future in support of the follow-up to the study in those subregions.

Council of Europe

101. The Special Representative pursued fruitful collaboration with the Council of Europe, with which she joined hands, together with UNICEF and the European Union, in the organization of the conference entitled "Combating violence against

children: from isolated actions to integrated strategies", held in Kiev during the Ukrainian chairmanship of the Council.

102. The conference addressed critical issues for the Central and Eastern European region, including strengthening violence prevention through the revision of national childcare standards and policies; providing family-friendly services to prevent violence and the separation of children from their families as a result of violent behaviour; promoting child-friendly counselling, reporting, complaint and referral systems and mechanisms within institutions hosting children; and developing comprehensive reintegration and rehabilitation programmes for child victims, witnesses and perpetrators of violence.

103. Participating countries reaffirmed their strong commitment to implementing the Council of Europe Policy Guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence, including through national action plans, policies and programmes in line with international and regional children's-rights standards. Strong commitments were made to the legal protection of children and the prohibition of all forms of violence against them; the establishment of an influential and well-resourced coordinating body to articulate all relevant actions in this area; and the development of widely available and accessible counselling, reporting and complaint mechanisms to address incidents of violence. The Kiev agenda will be pursued to consolidate the follow-up to the recommendations of the study.

European Union

104. In 2007, with a view to advancing the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children, the European Union adopted its Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child, which include a strategy for combating violence against children. The Guidelines provide a strong basis for collaboration with the European Union and for the implementation of the study's recommendations.

105. In 2011, the European Union Agenda for the Rights of the Child reaffirmed the commitment to advancing the implementation of the Guidelines, stressing that "the well-being of children can only be achieved in a society which is free of violence, abuse and exploitation of children".[9] These key instruments provide a sound basis for consolidating support for the implementation of the study's recommendations in countries across regions.

C. Cooperation with civil society, including children and young people

106. Collaboration with civil society actors is critical for advancing the implementation of the recommendations of the study, through their association with regional processes, their involvement in expert discussions on critical dimensions of the agenda, and their support for the global universal ratification campaign, the scaling-up of legal reform, the participation of children and the prevention of violence in schools, institutions and the home. Collaboration has been greatly facilitated by the establishment of the non-governmental organization Advisory

[9] See European Commission document COM(2011) 60 of 15 February 2011, para. 2.2.

Council and its advocacy and social mobilization efforts with partners at the international, regional and national levels.[10]

107. Strategic collaboration was further strengthened with the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Working Group on Children and Violence, as well as with Child Helpline International and its network. Present in more than 120 countries, child helplines play an invaluable role in the protection of children from violence, which is the main reason why children around the world call helplines. Helplines constitute a crucial reference for the development of child-sensitive mechanisms and an indispensable source of information on violence-related issues.

108. Recent months have also seen strengthened collaboration with faith-based organizations. Religious leaders were important allies in the development of the study and have remained key partners in the process of follow-up, fostering dialogue, promoting change in practices that perpetuate violence against children, and encouraging the use of non-violent forms of discipline. In order to strengthen these efforts, a strategic partnership was developed with the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children, a global movement of religious leaders and communities of all faiths and secular organizations committed to the promotion of children's rights and well-being. The World Day is celebrated every year during the week of 20 November, the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In collaboration with UNICEF, the World Conference of Religions for Peace, civil society organizations and the Office of the Special Representative, the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children launched an initiative to devote the next three years to the protection of children from violence. In support of this process, a panel discussion with key partners was held at the United Nations in New York in June 2011 under the auspices of the Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations.

Cooperation with young people

109. Child participation continues to be a core dimension of the Special Representative's mandate. Regular meetings have been held with children and young people, including within the framework of regional initiatives and field missions.

110. Violence is a key concern of children; in some regions, the phenomenon was identified as their most critical concern. Despite the fact that they are exposed to widespread violence, children show a remarkable resilience. Through school debates and community events, radio programmes and street theatre, cartoons, blogs and social media, they help to raise awareness among other children and their families about violence and its impact, create solidarity and support for child victims, and can instil the confidence to report incidents of violence and press for speedy and lasting solutions.

111. In order to maximize the involvement of children in discussions and action on violence, the Special Representative is engaging additional experts on child participation and will further develop the child-friendly space on her website.

[10] For further details, see A/HRC/16/54.

IV. Ensuring firm support

112. Ensuring sound support and predictable funding has been essential for promoting progress on this strategic agenda and for the effective and independent fulfilment of the Special Representative's mandate.

113. UNICEF provides administrative support for the mandate and has established a trust account in order to receive, hold, administer and disburse financial contributions provided to fund the operation of the Office of the Special Representative, including payment for personnel costs.

114. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 62/141, the mandate of the Special Representative is funded from voluntary contributions. In this connection, the Assembly called upon States and institutions concerned, United Nations agencies, regional and civil society organizations and the private sector to provide the necessary support, including financial contributions. The Assembly also anticipated the evaluation of the mandate three years after its establishment, in 2012, including with regard to its funding.

115. Contributions received by July 2011 have been crucial in relaunching and promoting the process of follow-up to the study, advocating and supporting developments for violence prevention and the protection of children from violence, and ensuring office support. However, additional funding remains essential if the Special Representative is to be able to effectively play her role as a global independent advocate. Firm support remains particularly important for the advancement of progress in the priority areas identified in her strategic agenda, the organization of thematic expert consultations, the development of advocacy materials and resources, and the continued consolidation of collaboration with regional governance structures to strengthen national follow-up to the study.

V. Looking ahead

116. The first two years of the mandate have seen significant developments. These include important legislative and policy measures undertaken by Governments to protect children from violence; strategic initiatives by United Nations agencies and mechanisms to mainstream the issue of violence against children into their agendas; and critical strides by regional organizations and groupings, as well as civil society actors, in institutionalizing the process of implementing the study's recommendations. Violence against children is giving rise to increasing concern and action, in many cases supported by wide social mobilization in which children themselves are playing a growing role.

117. At the same time, however, violence continues to compromise the rights of millions of children. Hidden and socially accepted, violence is met with passivity and indifference. Owing to weak reporting and to fragmented and short-term interventions, it is seldom high on the policy agenda or a priority topic of public debate. As a result, many children continue to live with trauma and in fear, self-blame, isolation and helplessness.

118. The urgency of ensuring children's freedom from violence has not diminished, and it is imperative that the current pace of progress be accelerated. With this aim, and within the overall framework of the priorities of her mandate, the Special

Representative will, in the forthcoming period, devote particular attention to the areas set out below.

A. Moving towards the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

119. Encouraged by the wide expression of support for the global campaign for universal ratification, which is rooted in significant commitments undertaken by the international community, the Special Representative will continue to actively promote the achievement of this goal.

B. Consolidating the development of regional governance structures and the promotion of the cross-regional exchange of experiences to ensure the protection of children from violence

120. The Special Representative will continue her advocacy in support of the institutionalization of regional governance structures and initiatives to accelerate progress in the follow-up to the study's recommendations. In this regard, the Special Representative will, in the coming months, host a high-level meeting with representatives of these regional mechanisms to help strengthen synergies among them, to promote a cross-regional exchange of experiences and to consolidate children's freedom from violence.

C. Organizing expert consultations and developing thematic reports

121. The Special Representative will continue her fruitful series of expert consultations on selected violence-related priority areas. As noted above, one of these will be devoted to the consolidation of data and research on violence against children; a second will address violence and the administration of justice.

Better data and research on violence against children

122. Violence against children is seldom reported, and official statistics remain limited in their ability to capture the true scale and extent of this phenomenon. As a result, available information is scarce and reflects only the tip of the iceberg. This is an area where urgent action is required and one to which the Special Representative will continue to devote priority attention. With that in mind, in 2012 she will join the Government of Sweden in the organization of an expert consultation on this issue.

Violence and the administration of justice

123. The Special Representative places special emphasis on violence in justice-related settings, through advocacy, policy dialogue initiatives and field missions. A justice system based on respect for the rights of the child is critical for preventing and addressing incidents of violence against children, as well as safeguarding the rights of victims and witnesses.

124. This is an area where significant work is being done, as illustrated in the 2011 thematic report on juvenile justice and human rights in the Americas issued by the

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, with the support of the Special Representative. The report identifies developments and good practices for the protection of children in the juvenile justice system and provides recommendations for the effective implementation of relevant international standards.

125. With a view to consolidating progress, the Special Representative will capitalize on significant experiences in various parts of the world, and will strengthen strategic partnerships with Member States, United Nations agencies, regional institutions, academia and civil society organizations. In this connection, she will join the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other partners in the organization of an expert consultation early in 2012.

D. Conducting a global survey to assess progress in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children

126. As indicated above, the Special Representative will conduct a global survey to map and assess progress in the implementation of the study's recommendations. The survey outcomes will be presented to the General Assembly in 2012 and are expected to inform the further acceleration of efforts in the implementation of the recommendations, and to sustain the momentum of work already under way.

127. Paragraphs 119 to 126 above highlight crucial areas of concern on which the Special Representative is committed to focusing. She looks forward to continuing to consolidate strong partnerships with Member States and all other relevant stakeholders to advance the effective implementation of the study's recommendations and to ensure the freedom of children from violence in all its forms.